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SELECT COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN

**Testimony of Rep. Mary Mushinsky (85th) in Support of Proposed S.B. 320,
AN ACT CONCERNING THE SELECTION OF TENANT COMMISSIONERS**

Before the Housing Committee

March 4, 2010

I support this bill which would create a democratic (spelled with a small d) process for selection of a commissioner representing tenants' interests on a local housing authority. As we know, the tenant representative is always outnumbered and therefore cannot dominate a housing authority board, yet it is important that the tenants' lone voice is a pure expression of the tenants' concerns. This is the voice that will advocate for quicker repairs, lower prices, right to know for tenants and other matters that might be conflict with priorities of the housing authority.

In Wallingford, local tenants have stated that the tenant representative could become a bolder voice if not beholden to the appointing power of the housing authority. At various times in the history of our local housing authority, decisions were made to sell off affordable units (over the strenuous objection of the tenants who lived there), limit public question and answer opportunities at meetings, and limit the ability of a newly formed tenants' organization to recommend a tenant representative. In a recent example in Wallingford, tenants were not asked for suggested names or even notified that there was a vacancy on the housing authority.

SB 320 would use a democratic process—a tenant organization election—to ensure the tenants's representative is truly the choice of the tenants. This process could be supervised by a local civic organization such as the League of Women Voters and the small cost could be paid for by membership fees to the tenant organization or federal HUD funds. Please support this change to provide a democratic process and a stronger tenant voice.